

**Written Testimony of**  
**Susan Eastwood, Commissioner, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Before the Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Appropriations**  
**February 19, 2013**

Testimony in **OPPOSITION** to the consolidation of Commissions proposed in:  
**H.B. No. 6350 AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING**  
**JUNE 30, 2015, AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO REVENUE**

Dear Senator Harp, Representative Walker and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Susan Eastwood; I am the Director of Communications and Outreach for the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut/ Clean Water Action and a newly appointed Commissioner on the Permanent Commission of the Status of Women.

I am testifying in opposition to the proposed consolidation of the Commissions and in support of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women.

My life's work has been in pursuit of justice for women. I spent 25 years working to end domestic violence, including working as a victim advocate in the frontlines at Hartford Criminal Court. I have taught workshops for college age women in how to negotiate for equal pay in their first jobs and seen their faces when they realize that they stand to lose up to two million dollars in pay during their lifetimes due to the inequitable wages paid to women. I have raised money to fund doctoral research which allows more women to enter fields previously closed to us, or exposes middle-school girls to the possibilities of a career in math, science or government. I do this because I have been in all of these places myself and I don't want my daughter, grand-daughters and their generations of women to have to fight this battle.

But we are not there yet. Women are the only majority (51% of the population and of the CT labor force) that has consistently been treated as a minority – wrongly, inequitably and as second class citizens. Women in the U.S. are paid only 77% of the wages a man earns for the same work. Minority women fare even worse, with African-American women earning 62 cents for every dollar earned by men and Latina women earning 53% of what a man makes. Women's rights to health care are in jeopardy even as we speak. One in four women will face domestic violence in their lifetimes. These conditions affect not only women, but every man and child who has a woman in their lives.

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women plays a unique role in the fight for equal rights and justice for women. We are a policy group which was formed by legislative mandate 40 years ago, in recognition that women had not yet achieved equality. Connecticut's PCSW is the oldest such group in the nation. Our role is to advise the legislature on issues pertaining to women. As a research and policy group, PCSW does not spend its time fighting the fight on the

frontlines of court or clinic. We are the voice for women here, in government. This is a crucial role and will be so until women are truly equal. Considering that women currently comprise only 29% of this legislative body, this will be many years in coming!

Our work supports a woman's economic security, health and safety throughout her lifespan and helps eliminate gender-based discrimination. This important work should not be diluted by combining it with the many other legitimate concerns covered by the other Commissions. The savings the state would achieve if they consolidate the Commissions are not great. The PCSW staff has been cut in half already and the current budget is about 35 cents per adult woman in Connecticut (1,435,664 women over the age of 18). Aren't the women in your lives worth 35 cents a year?

A quick look at our list of accomplishments is enough to show what a dynamic and effective group this is. I strongly urge you to reject the proposed consolidation of the Commissions and allow the PCSW to continue its excellent work.

Thank you.